

— such statements don't
create legends
but for temporary mortals
they still have a
rather
sturdy worthiness.

BAND-AID

we are destroyed by our
conscience, I explained to
him.

no, no, that's not what I
mean, he said.
I mean, I'll wake up
feeling good, you know,
ready for the action, ready
for whatever's out there and
then the first words she'll
say to me
will be
simply vicious and stupid,
really unwarranted, you know.
then, I'm depressed, the
whole day's
shot through the head.

we are destroyed by expecting
more than there is,
I said.

or, he continued, I'll be out
there all day, it will be hard
enough but I'll see it through
and I'll drive up thinking, now
for the good part, I'll park it,
get out, walk in the door,
then she'll say something
totally unrelated either to her
or to me, I mean something that
is simply and violently ugly,
right off, you know, and there
goes the evening and the night,
there goes any good feeling
I might have had.

you sound like a little nit-
pick, I said.

you mean these things don't
happen to you? he asked.

I mean, with your
woman?

never, I told him.

no problems? she respects you?
he asked.

she adores me, I said, the way
I speak, walk, talk, my skin-
glow, the whole bundle.

I don't believe you,
he said.

you shouldn't, I
answered.

why do women act
like that? he
asked.

it's love, I answered,
they care.

maybe it would be better
if they hated us?
he asked.

they do, I said.

I just wish they'd treat us
with the same respect they
do with strangers, he
said.

we couldn't stand that,
I said.

you mean we get what we
need? he asked.

we need what we get, I
told him.

is there anything else?
he asked.

not today, I said, we've
been talking an hour —
that's \$75.

I just think you've
compounded my

problem, he
said.

of course, I told him, and
that's why you must
come back.

I think not, he
said.

that's true, I told
him, good
day.

SELF-INVITES

well, put my ass on backwards, phone China, notify the
iceman he forgot to deliver, run the birds off the wire,
dial 911, buy a painting of a red dove and remember
Herbert Hoover,
what I am trying to say here is that 6 nights out of the
last 8 there have been visitors, all self-invites, and
like my wife says, "we don't want to hurt their feelings,"
so we have sat about and listened to these, some of them
famous and some of them not so, some of them fairly bright
and entertaining, some of them not so
but it all ends up as chatter, chatter, chatter, voices,
voices, voices, a polite heady whirling of sound and
there's a loneliness there: they all want to be recognized
in one way or the other,
they want to be listened to and that's understandable but
I am one of those human beings who would rather sit quietly
with his wife and 6 cats or I like to sit upstairs alone
doing nothing.
the idea is that I am selfish and that these people
diminish me, and the longer I sit and listen to them
the more I feel like a piece of dung but I don't get
the idea that they feel like pieces of dung, I feel
that they enjoy the sounds from their
mouths
and when they leave almost all of them make little gestures
toward future visits.
my wife is nice, makes them feel warm as they exit, she's
a good soul, so good a soul that when, say, we eat out and
get a table she always takes a seat where she can "see the
people" and I take a seat where I can't.

all right, so I was forged by the devil: almost all
humankind disinterests me and no, it's not fear although
certain things about them are fearful, and it's not
competition because I don't want